

## Lawyers as heroes: Promoting altruism in law students through pro bono teaching clinics

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# **Lawyers as Heroes: Promoting Altruism in Law Students through Pro Bono Teaching Clinics**

Nick James and Franci Cantatore















CLE and student pro bono activity are vital components of a comprehensive social justice education at law school. They should both exist in all law schools in Australia so as to provide a proper legal education for students. It is important that they be managed as complementary activities, occurring in close cooperation with each other.

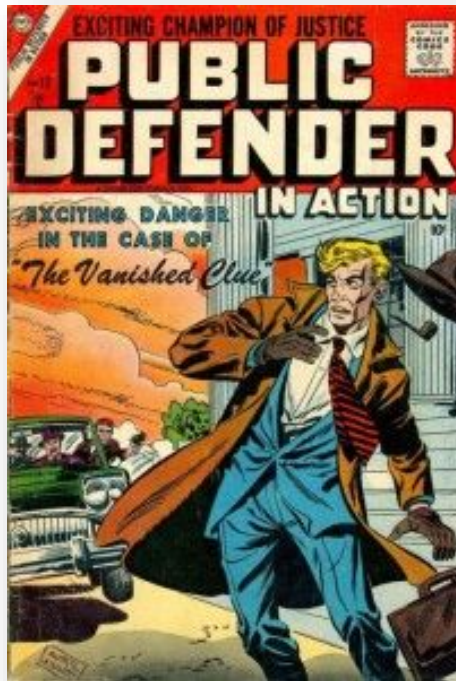
John Corker, 'How Does Pro Bono Students Australia (PBSA) Fit with Clinical Legal Education in Australia?' (2005) 6

[S]uch opportunities will instil in law students one of the fundamental values of the legal profession – the desire to promote justice, fairness and morality for all, and in particular the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised members of society.

Les McCrimmon, 'Mandating a Culture of Service: Pro Bono in the Law School Curriculum' (2003) 14(1) *Legal Education Review* 53, 54



# Heroism science and legal education



## Contribution 1

### Elevating the narrative

By emphasising the potential for lawyers to play heroic roles, and by focussing upon the development of heroic virtues at law school, the application of heroism science to legal education has the potential to elevate the legal education narrative, and shift the emphasis away from the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills and towards the transformation of the self.



# Heroism science and legal education

## Contribution 2

### The Virtues of Heroic Lawyering

Heroism science offers law teachers a clearer understanding of the nature of heroic lawyering and of the specific virtues required to qualify as a heroic lawyer.



# Heroism science and legal education

## Contribution 3 The Heroic Journey

The metaphor of the hero's journey can be used by law teachers to help law students to make sense of the challenges they face in the law school environment, to inspire them to persevere despite those challenges, to ensure they appreciate importance of developing not only their practical legal skills but also heroic virtues, and to inspire them to use the magical talisman they earn – their legal expertise – for the benefit of their community once they return 'home'.





# Bond Law Clinic - Challenges



## **Challenge 1**

Many of the participating students struggle with the differences between learning the law in the classroom and advising real clients about the law applicable to their real legal problems.

## **Challenge 2**

The goal of promoting in students capacities such as empathy, altruism and courage is not one that is operationalised in a systematic manner.



Simply participating in a pro bono program while at law school will not necessarily manifest in a willingness to engage in pro bono work following graduation. The experience must be monitored closely to ensure that the educational objective – that is, to foster or, in some cases, to inculcate, an ethic of volunteer service – is achieved.

Les McCrimmon, 'Mandating a Culture of Service: Pro Bono in the Law School Curriculum'  
(2003) 14(1) *Legal Education Review* 53, 68





### **Proposal 1**

#### **Clinical Program Objectives**

A clinical program such as the Bond Law Clinic should have learning outcomes describing the knowledge students are expected to acquire and the skills students are expected to develop. They should also include a description of the personal traits students are expected to develop as a result of participating in the program.



## Proposal 2

### Clinical Program Activities

For many students participation in the clinic is a stressful experience, not least because the students often discover that they lack the ability to perform the relevant task competently, at least at first. The metaphor of the hero's journey provides the students – as well as the academics and the practitioners – with a narrative structure that explains and justifies both the challenges and the need for assistance.

### Proposal 3

#### Clinical Program Evaluation

If the objectives of the program include the inculcation within the students of the range of heroic traits, it is important that the program be evaluated to determine whether or not those objectives have been achieved. The heroic traits developed as a result of participating in the program should be traits that the students continue to demonstrate after completion of the program.

Excellent

Good

Average

Poor





# DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY RIGHT NOW

